



Northwestern University

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ANNUAL ADDRESS

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
OF THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

CHARLES WILLIAM PEARSON, A. M.
OF THE CLASS OF 1871

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY.

[COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS.]

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

A By-Law of the Alumni Association requires the President to make an annual report in writing, and in obedience to this provision I herewith submit the following statement.

In accordance with a resolution passed at the last annual business meeting, the Executive Committee appointed Dr. E. P. Clapp and me a committee to ask the Trustees to bear the expense of publishing an Alumni Quarterly. The Trustees gave a courteous reply to our communication, but on discovering that the terms of the resolution requested them to bear the whole expense of the publication they deemed it inexpedient to assent and discontinued the negotiation.

A Founders' Day banquet was given on January 28, 1901. The Alumni Association was invited by the Trustees to co-operate with them in this, and our Executive Committee deemed it best to do so, as we wished to avoid any apparent rivalry that might interfere with the success of the semi-centennial celebration. The attendance on the occasion was nearly 450.

I report with great pleasure that a portrait of Dr. Bonbright, by Mr. Ralph Clarkson, is nearly completed and that it will be presented to the Trustees to-morrow. The money for it has all been contributed by Alumni, and the letters from older and more recent Alumni alike in reply to our circular have been most cordial and gratifying. As it was our purpose to make this a general testimonial, we asked for only a small sum from each subscriber. We expected to need about \$300, and this sum was

readily subscribed, many Alumni offering to increase their subscriptions if the required amount was not otherwise obtained. We have not found it necessary to appeal a second time to any of these generous friends. The treasurer's report will give further details as to the names of the subscribers and the amounts contributed by each. Such is the brief history of the joint action of your officers for the past year.

Let me add a few more personal words. It is very natural that one appointed to the presidency of any organization should be led to consider with special care the purposes for which the society exists and the ambitions it may honorably cherish. That certainly has been the effect upon my own mind. I have never felt so keenly the great powers and great responsibilities of this Association, and I wish to state, as it may be my most appropriate opportunity to do so, that this and the other Alumni Associations of the University should make it their avowed, their earnest, and their persistent purpose to exert a strong influence upon the policy of the institution.

Children are the natural heirs of their parents, and this is as true in the intellectual as in the physical world. In many of the older universities, both European and American, the Alumni are by charter and statute the sole governing body. In other institutions, while not having exclusive control, they have a legal right to representation. The statutes of Northwestern University make no provision for Alumni representation on the Board of Trustees, but they do not in any way forbid it, and there is no reason why the Alumni should not, in course of time, secure all the control they are fitted to exercise wisely, and power they are not fitted to exercise wisely they ought not to seek.

There are two very simple reasons for thinking that the Alumni, next to the founders and benefactors of the University, are its natural governors. They are these: The Alumni have a larger knowledge of the condition and needs of the University and a greater interest in it than any outsider. Next to integrity and ability, special knowledge and personal affection are the

most important qualifications of a University Trustee. There are few Alumni who are without these qualifications, and there are few outsiders who have them in anything like the same degree.

There is an analogy between the relations of a citizen to the country and an alumnus to his university, and as the citizen at the age of 21 becomes a member of the body politic and is expected to take an active and intelligent part in the government of the country, so an alumnus ought to receive a similar educational franchise and be expected to take an active and intelligent part in the government of his Alma Mater.

In my judgment, this is not only theoretically right, but practically necessary. Our government is a democracy, or, in other words, a government by public opinion, and in the formation of public opinion the universities have and should have a very large and important part. A very large percentage of the teachers, preachers, lawyers, legislators and journalists are educated in the universities and in turn they educate the nation.

Universities should be and commonly are among the foremost of the agencies by which knowledge, virtue, liberty and religion are advanced. Wycliffe, Luther, Milton and Wesley were educated in universities. But it is common to dwell unduly upon a few very eminent names. I prefer to emphasize the thought that the great body of steady intellectual workers, by whose wisely directed and ceaseless energies civilization is advanced and humanity uplifted "inch by painful inch," are university men. This is so obvious at present that it may seem that we need only congratulate ourselves upon the prosperity and increasing power of the higher institutions of learning in America.

Yet history gives no warrant for this complacency. Eternal vigilance is the price of intellectual and religious as well as of political liberty. Universities in other countries and ages have sunk into indolence and worldliness, into sloth and superstition, or have become active propagators of error and instruments of oppression. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were

among the chief supporters of the abominable tyranny of the Stuart kings. Their conduct was so ignoble and servile that it is not without warrant that Pope sneers at them in this couplet:

“May you, my Cam and Isis, preach it long,
The right divine of kings to govern wrong.”

The case against the mediæval University of Salerno is thus expressed by Longfellow, though it should be borne in mind that the poet speaks dramatically and that it is through the mouth of Lucifer that the charges are made:

“The buildings have an aspect lugubrious
That inspires a feeling of awe and terror
Into the heart of the beholder,
And befits such an ancient homestead of error,
Where the old falsehoods moulder and smoulder,
And yearly by many hundred hands
Are carried away in the zeal of youth,
And sown like tares in the field of truth,
To blossom and ripen in other lands.”

But we need not go to other countries and remote times and to the poets for intimations that dangers beset University life, as they beset every other human institution. President Hyde of Bowdoin, a few days ago, delivered a very impressive address upon “Academic Freedom.” He referred specially to Brown University, Chicago University, Kansas State Agricultural College and Leland Stanford University, and “sounded a note of warning against the spread of what he termed ‘Rockefellerism’ in the American college of to-day.” President Hyde thus defines the new issue and danger: “The question of academic freedom did not rise so long as colleges taught Latin, Greek and mathematics, for the simple reason that people did not care much one way or the other for what was taught about these things. Interference with liberty comes only when subjects are taught for which the people care. Now that economic and social questions have come to the front, it is in connection with them that nearly all our troubles have arisen. Theological persecu-

tion we have wherever institutions are tied to creeds; political persecution we have, spasmodically, in political campaigns; but popular interest is coming more and more to center in social and economic questions. Unless we can come to a clear understanding as to the rights and duties of the several parties to university instruction, professorships of economics and sociology will be as perilous positions in a democracy as chairs of politics ever were in an absolute monarchy or chairs of theology in the palmy days of papal power. To define the rights and duties of the parties to such university instruction, securing reasonable liberty for all and a free course for the truth, is the most pressing educational problem the nineteenth century hands over to the twentieth."

I do not wish my words to be misunderstood. You are probably all aware that some socialistic speakers and some newspapers have charged interference of the sort deprecated by President Hyde against the Trustees of Northwestern University. I do not wish in anything I have said or may say as to the proper policy of the Alumni Association to give the shadow of countenance to that suspicion. I sincerely believe it to be untrue. Our trustees are men of high character and great wisdom, and after a service under them of full thirty years it is a pleasure to me to express the belief that in all their acts they have been governed solely by a desire to promote the highest and most enduring interests of the institution. Our trustees have given unselfishly their time, their money, their constant and anxious thought to the welfare of the University, and every alumnus owes them a deep debt of gratitude. The purpose of this discussion is not in any way to reflect upon them, but only to show how the Alumni Association may co-operate with them and help to make permanent the work they have so nobly begun.

The University stands for Christian learning. It was founded by deeply religious men, who by the noble motto, *Quæcumque sunt vera*, they took for the institution, proclaimed their belief

that truth is the only sure and eternal foundation for education, for morality and for religion.

The United States stands now for inventive genius, for manufacturing supremacy, for commercial enterprise, for popular education, for philanthropic ideals, yet all the unique and many-sided greatness of this, the foremost of modern nations, springs from the one great foundation principle that the intellect must always be loyal to all truth and the conscience must always be obedient to all duty. Political and religious liberty, a free church in a free state, is the short secret of America's past greatness.

But we are entering upon a new epoch, one of unparalleled material wealth and of unparalleled temptation to worship the money-god. We are morally enervated by luxury and dazzled by splendor. It is easy to bear poverty when everybody is poor. It is easy to live simply when everybody else lives simply. But it is not easy to bear poverty amid wealthy neighbors or to live plainly amid ostentatious ones. We are all in danger of being swept along by the great social currents of our time.

But the practical point from which I must not drift away is this: A tremendous struggle is in progress between the masses and the classes for the control of the wealth of the nation, and in this great struggle the universities will all sooner or later be involved. They must exert their influence for or against the laws and policies which concentrate wealth in the hands of the few. In a word, they must become champions of the people or pensioners of the moneyed classes and supporters of their interests. President Hyde, from whose address at Boston University I quoted a moment ago, has coined a new word, "Rockefellerism," as a synonym of capitalistic control of a university. He may be doing Mr. Rockefeller a gross injustice in suggesting that his more than princely gifts to a neighboring institution have behind them any secondary and sinister design. I prefer to think that Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Carnegie and the other great financial geniuses who are also great givers are living up to all the

light they have. Their liberality is certainly as wonderful and unparalleled as any of the great American achievements which are astonishing the world in our day.

“’Tis from high life high characters are drawn;
A saint in crape is twice a saint in lawn.”

A generous rich man is often more worthy of praise than a generous poor one, for he has a greater weight of resistance to overcome. It is as true now as when Jesus uttered it: “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven.” I think we should all join with our sister university in cordial recognition of Mr. Rockefeller’s great services to the cause of education. Deprecating all evil imputations and putting the most natural and best construction upon the benefactions of rich men, let us look at the question quite impersonally as a matter of public policy upon which honest men are certain soon to differ sharply. President Hyde speaks thus of the rights of a donor to a college: “A donor has no more right to dictate what views an institution shall teach than a stockholder of a steamship company has a right to direct a pilot how he shall steer the ship to which a thousand lives have been entrusted. * * * Neither may he legitimately draw up a creed or statement of opinion which the professors in the institution shall be bound to teach. To do that would be like sending a boat to sea with the tiller lashed in position, and with instructions to the sailors on no account to touch it, even though the boat might be making straight for the icebergs or the rocks. The attempt of a donor to dictate the views which a professor shall teach is to arrogate to himself the attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and immortality; an arrogance of which no mortal would care to be guilty.”

The history of the past has certainly shown that gifts in support of the prevailing religious, political or social opinions have often in a short time become mischievous obstructions to necessary change, mere temptations to men to perpetuate an outworn belief or useless routine because there was a sure and

easy livelihood to be gained by so doing. The courts of almost every civilized country have been obliged to abrogate the conditions attached to ecclesiastical endowments and to apply to other purposes funds which were maintaining mistaken and mischievous opinions and demoralizing the men who accepted them. These endowments have sometimes become subtle forms of bribery and made the faith and piety of ancestors the destruction of the virtues of their descendants.

All that I wish to do in touching upon this great subject is, if possible, to impress the Alumni Association with a deeper sense of its privileges and duties in connection with the University. I have no revolutionary program or spirit. I advocate no constitutional change, no agitation, no demands, not even any requests to the Trustees, but this simple policy that every member of the Alumni Association should take a constant and intelligent interest in the affairs of the University, so that his influence will always be felt.

I think that the Trustees are heartily in accord with this view, and desire our co-operation. It is interesting to note the fact that, although the University is only half a century old, and its graduates are still comparatively few in number, and very many of them are still young men, they are already so largely represented in the governing corporation. The Board of Trustees consists of forty-four members, of whom no fewer than eleven are graduates of the College of Liberal Arts.

James Russell Lowell makes Hosea Biglow say of a little red school house:

“Wal, here it wuz I larned my A B C,

An’ it’s a kind o’ favorite spot with me.”

And Byron in sad retrospect declares:

“Dear is the schoolboy spot

We ne’er forget though there we are forgot.”

Those who spend four years amid these scenes of beauty and grandeur; those who gather knowledge and train their minds in these halls, those who own Northwestern as a genuine Alma

Mater, as the real mother of their intellectual faculties, their real guide into the problems of life, will never forget or cease to love her.

If this Association does its duty, in another half century the majority of the governing Board will be Alma Mater's own beloved children. The University in all probability has hundreds of years of life before it, and the best assurance that I can think of that through all its coming centuries its far-reaching influence shall be for good, that it shall respond to the changing needs of men, and shall advance with the advance of knowledge is that it shall always be governed by those who know it and love it.

Every member of every graduating class should become a member of this Association, and I think that a few years of well-directed effort under the new By-Law dispensing with an initiation fee would secure this result. It would, I think, be a great help to this end if every year one of the exercises on our program should be an address of welcome to the graduating class and a response by some one selected by the class to represent it.

I think that legislative and financial questions should not be allowed to consume so much time at these gatherings. I should like to have the business meeting in the forenoon and a lunch at 12:30 in a big tent on the campus, and after luncheon a free and easy program of songs and speeches.

I have one other recommendation to make, and that is that the name of this Association be changed from *The Alumni Association of Northwestern University* to *The Alumni Association of the College of Liberal Arts of Northwestern University*. Every other department of the University has its own Alumni Association, and to ignore them seems a needless discourtesy and tends to prevent the perfect union of feeling we all desire. Truth, justice and kindness are principles that should govern in all the relations of life.

It is a pleasure to thank all my colleagues for cordial support in the various matters which have required our attention, and

which consume so much of that time which is these busy days is hard to spare.

It is with great sorrow that I report the death during the year of Mrs. Mary Hill Sheets, of the class of 1884. Mrs. Sheets at the time of her death was a membr of the Board of Directors, and in accordance with Article 2 of the By-Laws the Directors elected Mr. William A. Burch, of the class of 1890, the Financial Secretary of the University, to fill the vacant position. This temporary election requires your confirmation to make it valid for the full term of three years.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES WILLIAM PEARSON.

NOTE.—This report is published by order of the Alumni Association. Mr. James H. Raymond, of the class of 1871, was appointed a committee to publish it, and through his influence it is printed without charge to the Association by the Gunthorp-Warren Printing Company, of Chicago, Illinois.



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